down the hated hedges. At Leicester, where in 1649 there were rumours of a popular movement to throw down the enclosures of the neighbouring forest, the City Council took the matter up, A petition was drafted, setting out the economic and social evils attending enclosure, and proposing the establishment of machinery to check it, consisting of a committee without whose assent enclosing was not to be permitted. A local minister was instructed to submit the petition to Parliament, " which hath still a watchful eye and open ear to redress the common grievances of the nation."[1W] The agent selected to present the city's case was the Rev, John Moore, a prolific pamphleteer, who for several years attacked the depopulating landlord with all the fervour of Latimer, though with even less than Latimer's success.

Half a century before, such commotions would have been followed by the passing of Depopulation Acts and the issue of a Royal Commission. But, in the ten years since the meeting of the Long Parliament, the whole attitude of public policy towards the move-ment had begun to change. Confiscations, compositions and war taxation had effected a revolution in the distribution of property, similar, on a smaller scale, to that which had taken place at the Reformation.

As land changed hands, customary relations were shaken and new interests were created. Enclosure, as Moore complained,[11]* was being pushed forward by means of law suits ending in Chancery decrees. It was not to be expected that City merchants and members of the Committee for Compounding, some of whom had found land speculation a profitable business, should hear with enthusiasm a proposal to revive the old policy of arresting enclosures by State interference, at which the gentry had grumbled for more than a century.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that reformers should have found the open ear of Parliament